DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 173 791 CS 204 926

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TITLE The Sources of Radio News.
PUB DATE Aug 79
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (62nd, Houston, Texas, August 5-8, 1979); Not available in paper copy due to marginal legibility of original document

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Broadcast Industry; Communication (Thought Transfer); Content Analysis; Information Dissemination; *Information Sources; *Journalism; Media Research; *News Media; *News Reporting; *Programing (Broadcast); *Radio

ABSTRACT

To examine the production of programing material in a radio newsroom, a study was undertaken of the sources presented to the newsroom, of sources within the sources, of sources actively sought by the news staff, of degrees of processing of news items, and of the sources comprising the news output. Information in each of these areas was collected at a leading midwestern radio station through one week of informal observation in the newsroom and a two-week case study, employing content analysis, direct observation, and semistructured interviews. A total of 646 sources of news were identified for the period. Results were as follows: the largest source of incoming news was that of the wire services; the other major news source was incoming telephone calls from public and corporate officials and labor spokesmen; public officials dominated the sources of incoming wire copy; the two sources accounting for most of the initial sources of newscast items were wire services and previously prepared newscast items; the news operation was more "reactive" than "active," relying heavily on previously prepared stories, initial sources, and wire services; and, in general, variability was not characteristic of the news sources used by this station. (DF)

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THE SOURCES OF RADIO NEWS

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Presented to the Radio-TV News Division, Association for Education in Journalism convention, Houston, TX, August 6, 1979.

This research was supported by a grant to the author from the National Association of Broadcasters and by the Instruction and Research Computing Center, the Ohio State University.

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THE SOURCES OF RADIO NEWS

The concept of a 'news source' is unique in the study of journalism in that a source can be defined in so many ways. A 'news source' can be an individual who alone or as one of several individuals can give information to a reporter, who uses that information to create a news story. A 'news source' can be a newsgathering organization which supplies news stories and information to other news organizations, which they in turn use either as raw material to create other news stories, or as their own news stories. Associate Press news stories become CBS Evening News stories. A completed news report such as the CBS Evening News, or a story within that report, becomes a source of news for an ultimate audience, and individuals quoted within that report are sources as well. A 'news source' then, can be arrayed anywhere from the beginning to the end of the news process, and sources serve, among other things, to demarcate the boundaries of components in that process.

Moreover, a substantial literature has accumulated on the translation of 'news sources' into 'sources of news,' though most of that literature focuses on print media. David Manning White's original 'gate-keeper' formulation focused on how one wire editor selected from one 'news source,' wire service copy, and he points out with some force that subjective and ecological constraints temper 'news judgment' even in the relatively simple task of wire news selection. Later, more sophisticated gatekeeping[1] studies, which have sought to account for the

translation of "news sources," through selection of sources, seeking of additional sources, production of news items and creation of a news package, have also noted such subjective and ecological constraints (for print news, see Roshco, 1975; Geiber, 1956; Bagdikian, 1971; Robinson, 1970; Tuchman, 1972, 1973 and 1978; Sigal, 1973; Grey, 1966; for broadcasting, see Altheide, 1976; Tuchman, 1969 and 1973; Wasman, 1973; Buckalew, 1974; Bagdikian, 1971).

Two major constraints on news processing and thus on treatment of news sources are time and money. Thus, for news gatekeepers dealing with a single news source again wire copy, Jones, Troldahl and Hvistendahl (1961) were able to demonstrate that the single best predictor of selection of news stories was the amount of time before deadline that a story was transmitted: the longer the span, the greater the likelihood of selection. In an observational study of one reporter under intense deadline pressure, Grey (1966) reported that his subject, who was covering U.S. Supreme Court decisions as they were issued, that other than the printed decisions themselves, the reporter was able to consult only one news source, the Court's own press officer. Epstein (1973) suggests that budget constraints, among other things, mandate that certain nodes in the "news net"[2] are more likely originating sources of television network news than distributions of the U.S. population would predict.

Other things also serve to truncate utilization of sources in news selection and processing. Crouse (1973) and Dunwoody (1978), for example, have noted that when reporters converge to

cover the same news event, consensual definitions of news emerge. Sigal (1973) has noted that on the New York Times and Washington Post, the vast majority of staff-produced news emanates from government officials through routine channels: In the two papers, some 81 percent of cited news sources in all stories were either governmental officials or other news organizations (1973: table 6-5, p. 124), and less than 28 percent of all staff copy could be considered items initiated by the papers' reporters or editors, rather than sources (table 6-2, p. 122). Bagdikian, (1971: Ch. 7) in a content analysis of Grand Rapids-Kalamazoo newspaper and broadcast news for one day, concluded that 83 percent of the broadcast news was wasted, either because of time duplications in news scheduling or because of repetition of news items drawn largely from identical news sources, the two wire services. Thus the pattern of broadcast news in that market showed restriction of news sources at both ends of the news transmission chain.

By and large, however, specific examination of sources for, and sources in, broadcast news has been more limited than that accorded to print media, with least attention devoted to radio. Two studies, however, of radio news are particularly pertinent.

In the aftermath of flood disasters in several communities, Waxman (1973) found substantial alterations in the structure of news processing and in the treatment of news sources. During normal operations, radio news personnel relied heavily on public-official news sources and the wire services, and news-gathering tended to be the routine translation of sources' information into forms readable over the air. When the community

is stricken, a massive structural dislocation occurs as stations move to all-news programming. Stations are immediately afflicted by a shortfall of news and of resources to cover it, and because normal lines of communication are disrupted, gathering news becomes increasingly difficult. Among other outcomes, Waxman's radio news personnel reported, "raw events" and 'the public' become principal news sources for the first time. Unfortunately, Waxman's study was post-hoc only, and no content analysis, either of routine or disaster news was conducted.

Perhaps the most intensive study of the sources of radio news is Buckalew's 1974 examination of 33 radio news editors for 29 stations in 11 Western markets. Using content analysis and nonparticipant observation, Buckalew isolated nine types of sources used by his broadcast journalists and charted the number of incoming stories or news tips from each, the proportions of each which were selected as news and the proportions of each in the total news output. Table 1 is a reconstruction of data Buckalew reports.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

As Buckalew's data indicate, the vast majority of news sources coming into the stations are either other media or governmental officials; only three percent of incoming stories and six percent of stories written for broadcast involve reportorial enterprise.[3] However, size of market was related to sources used. In large markets, 36 percent of wire stories, 64 percent of phone stories, 21 percent of beat contacts, three percent of news releases and all enterprise stories were used,

while newspapers, radio monitors, sales departments and editors did not serve as sources. Moreover, news output in large market stations comprised 70 percent wire-originated stories, 16 percent from reporters, eight percent from beats and five percent from telephone calls. Buckalew suggests that wire copy in larger stations was more likely to have local angle as wire service bureaus were usually located in these markets, and wire copy was more likely to be rewritten or pencil-edited than in smaller stations, where it was more likely to be 'ripped and read.'

Buckalew's principal conclusion was that more than three out of four stations in his 29-station sample could not be considered "rip and read" operations, and that the stations, especially ones in larger markets, use their input news stories, including wire copy, as news tips to begin a cycle of newsgathering. But several limitations of the Buckalew study are apparent. The study apparently assumes a single source of information for each story; thus a "reporter" story, in which a reporter contacted, for example, a district attorney, a mayor and a judge, would be coded as a "reporter-sourced" story only. Further, the study also apparently assumes each radio story is novel. Buckalew does not comment on any instances in which a story prepared early in the news day by the editors he observed, was rewritten, with or without fresh information, as a story for a later newscast. In addition, it has been previously noted that 'sources' can be considered to be 'imbedded,' so that a statement by a mayor, recorded in an AP story selected as news by a radio editor becomes a 'source' in a story heard by a news listener. The Buckalew study cannot trace sources in that detail.

Finally, the Buckalew study is able only in a comparatively general way to comment on the "activity" or 'reactivity' of radio news editors in treatment of news sources. More precise measures of editor activity in source treatment, ones which arrayed along a continuum from 'ripping and reading' to "ripping and rewriting" to compiling several sources to active soliticitation of information of sources, would better describe the nature and degree of processing in radio news.

A clearer picture of what goes on in a radio newsroom, then, would require an examination of the sources presented to its gatekeepers, of sources-within-the-sources, of sources actively sought the news staff, of degrees of processing of news items, and, finally, of the sources comprising the news output. One of the contributions of this study, then, is to examine empirically the extent to which 'sources' as they are here depicted serve to help understand the process of radio news production.

Moreover, underlying the study is an assumption that news in any medium is most clearly presented when journalists exercise relatively high degrees of control over it. A second assumption is that variability in the ensemble of sources used to produce that news, whether the variability measure is of media sources or individuals as sources, helps to assure that the news presentation is a balanced one.

Previous research, however, suggested the following expectations for the present study:

1) 'Reactive' rather than 'active' news production should characterize the radio newsroom; and

2) Official rather than variable sources of news should predominate, in news stories presented to the newsroom and in stories prepared for broadcast.

Purposely selected for study was a newsroom which was expected to give a rather stringent test to the first expectation, as it was a market-dominating clear-channel AM station in one of the nation's 25 largest broadcast markets. Located in a Midwest metropolitan area which also included the state capital, four daily newspapers and AP and UPI bureaus, the station employed a news director, seven fulltime news reporters and separate sports and announcing staffs.

After a week of informal observation in the radio newsroom, an observer conducted a two-week case study in July of 1975, employing content analysis, direct observation and semistructured interviews. Observed was the afternoon-evening news shift, and all incoming and outgoing news stories were saved for content analysis of written copy were available, and field notes were kept where no written records were available, as with audio cuts in news stories. All newsroom personnel knew the observer was engaged in research, but no one was briefed as to the purposes of the study, and in no case was the observer to perform any news functions. Observations were to be as unobtrusive as possible. The only breach of newsroom routine required of editors and reporters was their telling the observer the title of the person on the other end of incoming telephone calls where it was not readily apparent.[4]

The radio station had been purposely selected for research for several reasons: 1) It had a regional reputation for quality of news coverage and had won a number of national and regional news awards; 2) it had a tradition of pre-empting its MOR music-and-chatter format for news, especially for news of severe

weather or a threat of it; and 3) the station ran a larger quantity of news locally produced than any other in its market.[5]

The news cycle observed included five-minute newscasts at 2:55 p.m., 3:55 p.m. and 6 p.m. and 10-minute newscasts at 5 p.m. and 10 p.m. weekdays, with weekend newscasts at 2:50 p.m. (5-min.), 6 p.m. (5 min., Saturdays only), 5 p.m. and 10 p.m. (10 min. each). An added wrinkle was that during the summer, the station aired baseball games played by the local major league club. Any five-minute 'cast pre-empted by a game was dropped, but a 10-minute 'cast would follow the game if the game ended less than an hour after that newscast was scheduled. Moreover, if the team were playing a doubleheader, the news personnel were expected to produce a 10-minute newscast, including both local and national-international items, taken from the wire services, to be read between the games, to substitute for the 10-minute 'cast that would be lost by five hours of baseball. The unpredictability of when games might end led the news staff to keep a supply of wire copy at close hand on baseball days for use if a game ended early.

On a normal afternoon-evening weekday cycle, an editor and a reporter were at work in the newsroom, with the reporter available for spot assignments as they arose, although he was also charged with editing the 3:55 p.m. newscast. On Saturdays, a reporter worked a 'swing' shift and was available only until 6 p.m., and on Sundays, an editor worked alone. The news director, whose office was partitioned off the newsroom, performed no routine newswriting or editing functions, although he contributed three news stories during the observation period.

A state capitol correspondent, a beat reporter, telephoned in two one-minute "voicers" per weekday, one for use at 5 p.m. and another for 10 p.m., and a stringer in a state capitol in an adjoining state filed about one report per weekday, for use at 5 p.m. The former's reports were always used, but about 20 percent of the latter's were dropped. Not only were these two sources highly predictable in appearance, length and format, but they were easily processed as news, requiring only the isolation of the audio cut on a master recording tape, dubbing of the cut onto a newscast tape with the assistance of a station engineer, and writing of a two- to three-line lead-in for the voicer.

A. Sources of Incoming News

In addition to the capitol reports, a number of other news sources were available to the editor and reporter with no affirmative effort. Among these were unsolicited telephone calls from potential news sources, a few hand-delivered news releases (mail releases were processed by the morning staff, when the mail arrived), copies of the four local daily newspapers and the Wall Street Journal, and stories prepared by the other staff members. The latter were rare but included a few items by a morning staffer who liked to leave items for use at 5 p.m. and a story prepared by the news director about the opening of a medical clinic in which someone in the station management had an interest. During the observation period, however, neither the news releases nor the newspapers served directly as a source of a news item; four stories in the 13 days, however, indirectly did, as wire service

items directly traceable to newspaper stories or news releases. Editors never even scanned the newspapers for news tips.

By far the largest source of incoming news, however, was that of the wire services. In the newsroom were seven wire printers: The AP TTY-circuit A-wire, generally considered a newspaper circuit and used by the staff during the observation almost exclusively as a background source for stories on a pending sale of wheat to the Soviet Union the AP broadcast wire; the UPI broadcast circuit for that state and the one for the adjacent state; the UPI B-wire, a regional news and bureau-"hub" communication circuit a National Weather Service wire (ther was a large local Weather Service bureau); and a local "business" wire.[6] The daily output of the wires was awesome averaging more than 1,100 items and more than 100,000 words per day,[7] and these totals do not include wire copy left at the desk by the morning editor. This copy, usually the late morning state and local AP and UPI broadcast splits, usually totaled 20-40 items of about 100 words each. In addition, the editor's and reporter's diet included the morning radio newscasts, about 40 100-word items, and any memo left by the morning editor, who left the station before either afternoon staffer arrived. Thus the staff's fare during the course of an evening news shift would comprise about 110,000 words of copy, plus or minus no more than 10 per cent. The large majority of these items were, of course, irrelevant, sports items handled by others or national and international items which would be newsworthy only if a local angle could be adduced.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The other major news link was the telephone. As Table 2 shows, an average of 25 telephone calls came into the newsroom daily: virtually all calls were prescreened by a telephone receptionist, but a majority of incoming calls were not from news sources; they were requests for information, most frequently about weather and sports, and only about eight incoming calls a day were news related. About half of these calls were return calls placed by news sources responding to calls placed by newsmen. Public officials, labor spokesmen and corporate officials constituted virtually all such callers.

B. Sources within Incoming Sources:

Also analyzed for two subsampled days, those identified by editors on duty as the busiest and least busy during the observation period, was all incoming wire copy. The 2,004 wire stories transmitted July 9, a Wednesday, and July 19, a Saturday, cited information from a total of 1,058 identifiable sources, for a mean of 0.53 sources per story. Dominating the sources named in wire copy, accounting for 66.2 percent of first-mentioned sources and 63.6 percent of all sources, were public officials. Private officials, or designated representatives of corporations, interest groups, labor unions and sports, cultural or entertainment enterprises, accounted for 14 percent of references, documents, including government and private reports and news releases (where it was clear that a reporter had seen the report and was not quoting a 'live' source) accounted for 7.2 percent of citations; media for 4.2 percent; 'public figures,' including enter-

tainers, professional sports players, professionals and non-governmental "experts" such as university professors for 7.1 percent; and private individuals, who accounted for but four percent. Dominating the latter category were victims of crimes, accidents and disasters and "average persons" cited in economic stories.

C. Sources Selected as News:

From the tens of thousands of news items, tips and story possibilities the station editors had available in the two weeks studied, a total of 446 items were prepared for broadcast.[9] Data presented below comment both on the sources selected as news and, indirectly, on the way this selection characterizes news processing in the newsroom.

Table 3, compiled from observation field notes, shows the initial source of each news item prepared for broadcast. It demonstrates that the two sources which dominate the ensemble of possible sources of news items are the wires and previously prepared newscast items; these two categories account for about three-quarters of the initial sources of newscast items. Of particular note is that these two sources present news in forms generally readily acceptable for output, inasmuch as they require little or no additional work to render them stylistically acceptable as news items, while most of the other initial sources require allocation of more newsroom resources to make them into story-forms acceptable for broadcast.

TABLES 3 AND 4 ABOUT HERE

Moreover, field notes could be used to determine the number

of cases in which the initial source of news items served as the major or exclusive source of the item as written for broadcast.[10] In 62.1 percent of all cases, the initial source of a news item was the only source used in preparing the item, and for an additional 15.2 percent of the newscast stories, the initial source was the one on which the reporter or editor relied most heavily in preparing the item. In 4.2 percent of the stories, no determination could be made, and in only 18.4 percent of all cases did some source other than the initially-received one serve as the major source in preparing items.

As Table 4 notes, wire service items and previously newscast items also dominate the major-source category, again accounting for about three quarters of all stories. Comparing Tables 3 and 4, however, shows that for a minority of items, an initial source did serve as a tip for further exploration: while staff-sought telephone sources account for only 1.5 percent of initial sources of stories, they served as 5.6 percent of major sources, and 'other media' serve as major sources for a few more items than as initial sources. In this latter comparison, the mode was for an editor to search for usable audio on the network or AP audio feeds after learning about some news story from a wire report. This was done almost exclusively on weekends when good local audio was scarce.

In all, some 646 sources were used in preparation of newscast items, a mean of 1.45 sources per item. For 4.5 percent of newscast items, no source seemed to have been used; for 64.6 percent, one source was; for 18.6 percent, two sources were; for 9.3 percent of stories, three sources were employed; and for 3.2 percent of all the news items produced, or 14 items in 13 days,

four or more sources were employed. In no observed cases were more than six sources consulted in preparing a news item.

D. Newsroom Activity

The reliance on initial sources as compared with story development and on wire services and previously prepared stories is some indication of a 'reactive' rather than an 'active" news operation. Other measures of newsroom activity were also possible. Among these are the novelty or redundancy or each item, the subsequent use of items, the amount of aduio tape use in stories and the total time devoted by staffers to each item.

A news item was considered "novel" if no other story had appeared on that news topic that news day. Only 41.5 percent of all items written and produced by the evening news staff were novel. An additional 29.3 percent of total items had been on topics covered by the morning crew, and a total of 48.1 percent of all items used during the afternoon-evening shift were on topics covered previously by the evening news crew itself on the same day. This is obviously an ambiguous measure of "reactivity." One interpretation is that the news staff is not actively seeking news but is rewriting that which is already known; another, however, is that important news is being repeated in subsequent broadcasts, with additional information, to inform different news audiences. It was possible in this study to chart items written by the news staff to see if, and how they were reused in subsequent broadcasts, if a later newscast occurred. There were 212 stories which were followed by subsequent stories on the same news topic the same day. In the 212 such re-use cases, it was possible for the staff either to reuse the item exactly as written the first time, to rewrite it with no new information, to rewrite it with in-

formation passively supplied (e.g., from a wire service story or from an unsolicited telephone call), or to rewrite it incorporating actively sought information. In 12.3 percent of the cases, the 're-use' item was an exact copy; in 30.7 percent, it was rewritten with no new information; in 34.9 percent, with passively supplied material; and in 20.8 percent, or about one "re-use" story in five, with actively solicited information (an additional 1.4 percent were not classifiable).

Another measure of newsroom activity is the time and effort expended in incorporating audio material into news items. At this radio station, audio feeds were available from AP and from the network with which the station was affiliated, and they were routinely taped by a station engineer. National cuts would be used, however, in most cases only if a local angle were present. Local cuts were recorded from telephone calls and less frequently by the reporters' leaving the office with tape recorders. The editor was responsible for isolating all cuts on a newsroom editing deck, and, shortly before each newscast, for taking all tapes to an adjoining engineering studio to dub them onto a master with the assistance of an engineer. In all, 162 cuts were used during the 13-day observation, or about 0.36 tapes per news cast item; the large majority were used in the 10-minute 'casts at 5 and 10 p.m. No tape was used in 71.5 percent of the newscast items, one cut in 23.1 percent, two cuts in four percent, and three or more in 1.3 percent (five news items). No item used more than five cuts. Sources cited in these cuts are tabled below.

Finally, field notes were coded to indicate the amount of time news personnel devoted to items ultimately written and pro-

duced as news stories. While data below do not include general news-seeking activities such as wire stripping and filing, nor do they include the amount of time devoted to attempts to develop stories that subsequently failed, they do indicate generally that for the large majority of news items, the processing was, if nothing else, fast. "Rip and read" wire service items were coded as requiring one minute of processing time, though in fact some took even less. There were 111 items coded as requiring one minute, almost exactly one-quarter of all news items prepared for broadcast. The median preparation time for all items was five minutes.[11] Three-quarters of all items were completed in 13 minutes or less, and 90 percent in less than one-half hour of "real time" devoted to the item. Eight stories, or 1.8 percent of the total, required longer than 90 minutes, and seven of these were treatments of three different news topics on different days. These include the only stories which took the reporter away from the newsroom during the period. To restate the observation by Buckalew (1974), more goes on in the radio newsroom than 'rip and read," but in this newsroom the increment is by and large slight. See also Harless (1976).

E. Sources in the News:

Finally, an effort was made to identify those sources cited in prepared news stories as an indicator of what a news audience would hear. A total of 438 identifiable sources were included in the 446 items, or about 0.98 sources per item, but 112 items were without identifiable sources, about one-quarter of the total. Table 5, which logs both the first-mentioned source in stories and all sources in stories, includes

both all sources mentioned in written copy ready by a newsreader and sources quoted in audio cuts. Table 6 identifies sources in audio cuts, both with newsmen when they are part of the audio cut as a source (as in 'actualities') and with newsmen excluded.

TABLES 5 AND 6 ABOUT HERE

Both tables amply demonstrate about the radio station's news output what was previously noted about its wire service input: that governmental, corporate, institutional and media sources predominate: variability is not a characteristic of sources in the news.

DISCUSSION

This study has been an effort to characterize the sources of news and in the news for one radio station, the largest news operation in a major market. The station was purposely selected because it was a priori believed to be more active than its competitors in gathering the news. It continues to be so today. Nonetheless, data presented here indicate that while a certain amount of active newsgathering was going on, the bulk of the station's news processing was 'reactive,' a 'quick and dirty" response to information framed by passively supplied centralized news sources, primarily institutional ones, which were readily available. The station reacts to news more than it acts to discover and cultivate it, by a large margin.

Furthermore, the sources imbedded within the dominant source of incoming news, the wire service files, were themselves primarily official, corporate, institutional and media ones. It

should come as no surprise, then, that the sources within the outgoing news product, the one the audience hears, are by an official, corporate, institutional and media ones. And while it may be argued that not all statements made by sources are favorable to them or support the sources' points of view, certainly the vast majority do.[12] Moreover, journalists tend to cite sources, especially official ones, in such a way as to impute to them a degree of rationality and order, even on occasions when doing so is a distortion of the situation (Paletz, et al., 1971). Interestingly, first-mentioned sources lean even more heavily than total sources to government, corporations and institutions in all cases. And this provides another example of journalistic 'reactivity,' as later-cited sources are called upon to react to an official statement of events.

The present study depicts a newsroom in which the editors and reporters are confronted with a glut of events to be reduced to a manageable news product in a relatively short time; in so doing, the emergent product they create is a 'reactive,' a centralized and institutionalized one.

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[1]A distinction between 'gatekeeper' studies of news selection and "gatekeeping" studies examining a panoply of news processing variables and procedures is apparently original to Maxman (1973: 751) and serves to highlight the systemic nature of gatekeeping.

[2]The term is Gaye Tuchman's. See Tuchman, 1978: 15ff.

[3]It is impossible to discern, given Buckalew's coding scheme, the proportion of news sources which are governmental officials or representatives of corporations and institutions. Presumably "phone" and 'beat' sources include non-official sources, and reporter- or editor-generated enterprise stories might include a high proportion of official sources.

[4]For a more detailed discussion of methods employed in the study, see Whitney, 1978: Ch. 2.

[5]On the last day of the study, a competing station inaugurated an all-news format, with about the same sized news staff, but relied heavily on network and syndicated material. The station observed was also a network affiliate and relied on on-the-hour network newscasts for national and international news. On weekends, however, the 10-minute 5 and 10 p.m. newscasts included national and international news, a policy adopted, one editor said, because almost no local audio was available, and audio was required for good radio news. The same editor noted that a U.S. senator would call the station virtually every Sunday evening, knowing that whatever he said would be used because of the audio scarcity.

[6]This printer averaged two items per day and was no more than the equivalent of an electronic news-release service for paying clients. The station maintained the machine because the service transmitted high school football and basketball scores in the autumn and winter from throughout the state, a gathering chore which had previously fallen to the news staff.

[7]Mean items per day was 1,116.25; a median was 1,111.5. Mean words: 102,861, extrapolated from a mean words/item of 92.17 times 1,116 items. Mean words/item was computed from a full content analysis of a subsample of two days' wire input.

[8]The majority of stories (1,264 or 63.1 percent) cited no sources. The bulk of such stories were brief broadcast-wire items and "weather-wire" items. Some 4.2 percent of the news items contained more than two identifiable sources, and AP A-wire stories, not intended for broadcast, dominate this category.

[9]All but 17 items, or 3.8 percent of the total, were broadcast, though an additional eight items were prepared for one broadcast, omitted from it for a lack of time, and rescheduled for a later newscast. Of the 17 items never used, 14 were prepared for a single newscast canceled when a baseball game went into extra innings. Since all 446 items were prepared full expectation that they would be aired, and since a description of news processing is the principal aim of the study, data on the 17 non-broadcast items are included in the analyses below.

[10]This was accomplished by observing the editor and reporter at work on items. If either referred to no other source than the one on his desk or the tape he was editing, the source was considered an exclusive source. If other items were used, an effort was made to determine which item was referred to most frequently. This was usually simple, as the staffers would lay one atop the others on the desk beside their typewriters.

[11]Mean preparation time is not reported for several reasons: Two stories required several hours each on the part of the reporter, and several other stories were prepared by the state capitol correspondent and one other staffer outside of the newsroom. This relatively small number of cases, where the amount of time constitutes an extreme deviation from routine processing would, even if accurate estimates of the amount of time spent by the absent staffers were available, tend to inflate the mean as a realistic measure of central tendency. Moreover, on the two stories on which the reporter left the newsroom, he did so at the same time as his dinner break, and determining how much time went to the story was not possible.

[12]Indeed, a conventional and convenient assumption in "assertion analysis" is that a source's statement about himself or an issue he represents is a favorable one. See Wayne A. Danielson, "Content Analysis," Ch. 6 of R.O. Nafziger and D.M. White, eds., Introduction to Mass Communications Research, (Baton Rouge: Louisana State University Press, 1963), p. 195, and sources cited therein. See Also Gans (1979 9ff.)

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TABLE 1: Incoming news sources, proportions selected and news output in the Buckalew (1974) radio station study:

Source	N=	Percent of total incoming sources	Percent Selected	N=	Proportion of Output
Wires	609	59%	45%	274	61%
Phone	74	7	67	59	11
Beat[a]	129	13	46	49	13
Newspaper	71	7	37	26	6
News Release	82	8	14	12	3
Reporter[b]	28	3	97	27	6
Own[c]	3	*	100	3	1
Sales Dept.	1	*	100	1	*
Radio[d]	22	2	0	0	0
TOTAL	1019	99%	44%	451	101%

*Less than 1/2 of 1%.

[a]Reporters' or editors' making a routine personal contact with a source.

[b]Reporters' enterprise or nonroutine contact with a source.

[c]Editors' preparation of a story on background with no source contact.

[d]News tip from monitoring police and emergency radio circuits.

TABLE 2: Wire item input, Telephone calls, and News stories output, by day, in an observed radio news operation, July 1975

Date	Wire Stories	Phone IN: News	Phone IN: Other	Phone OUT: News	Phone OUT: Other	Total phone calls News	Total phone calls Other	Total calls In	Total calls Out	Total calls per day	Output+ News Items
7/9	N/A[a]	13	18	20	7	33	27	31	27	58	31
7/10	1,224	11	16	8	3	19	19	27	11	38	32
7/11	1,123	9	23	10	0	19	10	32	11	29	31
*7/12	1,040	7	5	10	2	17	7	12	12	24	33
*7/13	1,007	0	11	2	0	2	11	11	2	13	31
7/14	1.112	3	14	4	1	7	15	17	5	22	32
7/15	1,111	10	27	12	0	22	15	37	12	49	38
7/16	1,081	10	21	8	1	18	22	31	9	40	38
7/17	1,107	9	20	13	3	22	23	29	16	45	38
7/18	1,179	16	32	8	3	24	35	48	11	59	34
*7/19	1,073	7	11	3	0	10	11	18	3	21	43
*7/20	1,134	6	6	1	1	7	7	12	2	14	28
7/21	1,205	5	19	1	1	6	20	24	2	26	34
MEAN:	1,116	8.1	17.1	7.7	1.7	15.8	17.8	25.3	9.4	33.6	34.1

+Includes all items prepared for broadcast, regardless of whether they aired.

[a]Parts of two wire files were lost; the overall mean is computed from 12 days.

*Denotes weekend days.

Table 3: Initial source of newscast items in observed radio newsroom.

Wire services	48.2%
Unsolicited telephone calls	9.9
Staff-sought phone	1.5
Other newsroom source	2.0
Other media sources*	3.3
Staff story**	5.6
Previous news item	26.0
Unclassifiable	3.4
Total: (n=446)	99.9%

Table 4: Major source of newscast items in observed radio newsroom.

Wire services	52.2%
Unsolicited telephone calls	8.3
Staff-sought phone	5.6
Other newsroom source	0.2
Other media sources*	4.2
Staff story**	5.4
Previous news item	18.2
Unclassifiable	5.8
Total: (n=446)	99.9%

*Includes network and AP audio feeds (the major source in this category) and news releases.

**Includes reporters' coverage of events, phoned-in stories by staffers out of the office, and stories left by morning news staff for use in the afternoon, as well as one story prepared by the news director. Does not include stringer phone reports, which are coded as unsolicited telephone calls unless a reporter or editor asked for a particular story.

Table 5: News sources cited in news stories prepared for newscasts, and first-mentioned news sources in stories for the observed radio station, in percentage points.

	Total Sources	First-Mentioned
Governmental officials, all levels:	51.6%	54.0%
"Private officials," including corporate, institutional and labor spokespersons.	25.1	26.7
Public and private documents, including news releases, where document was examined by a reporter.	2.1	1.2
Media and radic station staff members	13.2	13.4
"Personalities," public figures, professional sports players, entertainers and professionals and experts.	5.0	3.1
Private individuals, including accident, disaster and crime victims, criminal defendants not elsewhere classified.	3.0	1.6
Total:	100%	100%
	n=438	n=322

Table 6: Sources cited in audio tape in newscast items: Total sources and sources cited excluding reporters, in percents:

	Total Audio	Excluding Staffers
Governmental officials, all levels	41.7%	55.6
"Private officials"	23.7	31.6
Media	30.8	7.7
Personalities and public figures	2.6	3.4
Private individuals	1.3	1.7
	100.1%	100%
	n=156	n=117